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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 003945

SIPDIS

DEPT. FOR NEA/I AND EUR/SE; BAGHDAD ALSO FOR MNF-I

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TAGS: PREL MARR PINR PTER TU I2

SUBJECT: IRAQ/KIRKUK:GOT GIVES DIFFERENT ASSESSMENTS TO DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

REF: A. BAGHDAD 141

1B. BAGHDAD 138  
1C. BAGHDAD 105  
1D. ANKARA 3584

Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I., ROBERT S. DEUTSCH, REASONS 1.4 B AND D.

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Summary  
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11. (S) An interagency Turkish fact-finding mission visited Kirkuk July 6-11 (see Ref B) at the invitation of Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) leader Jalal Talabani. On July 14, the head of the mission, MFA Deputy Special Representative for Iraq Ethem Tokdemir, gave PolMilCouns the talking points he prepared to brief the diplomatic corps on the trip. His points (at para 2) express extreme concern and come on the heels of, and repeat the theme of, a press conference by TGS Deputy Chief General Basbug in which Basbug stressed the dangers to regional stability of changing the demographics of Kirkuk. Despite Tokdemir's grave and grumpy talking points, PUK Ankara rep Bahros Galali told PolMilOff July 14 that he had spoken with Tokdemir upon his return, and that Tokdemir said the GOT was "very happy about the reality we saw in Kirkuk, and that the situation is as Talabani said it was during his visit to Ankara" (Ref D). Galali said the PUK fully expected Turkey to take a tough public line despite the upbeat private readout. We will be encouraging Turkey to reconcile its strenuous objection to any demographic change in Kirkuk with our and Iraq's effort to resettle those who were ethnically cleansed/are IDPs from Kirkuk via in the Iraqi Property Claims Commission. End Summary.

12. (C) On July 14, Ethem Tokdemir, the head of the July 6-11 Turkish fact-finding mission to Kirkuk, and soon-to-be Turkish Charge in Baghdad, passed to PolMilCouns the following text that Tokdemir had prepared to brief the Ankara diplomatic corps on the trip. (The MFA spokesman made similar points to the press earlier July 14 - see septel.)

Begin text:

A delegation headed by Mr. Ethem Tokdemir, Assistant to the Special Representative of Turkey for Iraq, visited Kirkuk from 6 to 11 July 2004. The delegation met with the local authorities, political parties and representatives of all ethnic and religious groups, as well as community leaders and the US and UK diplomats regarding the recent developments in the city and the province.

The observations of the delegation can be summarized as follows:

- Kurdish parties, namely the PUK and KDP, are continuing their systematic efforts to change the demographic structure of Kirkuk. Thousands of Kurds are being encouraged to move to Kirkuk from northern provinces such as Sulaymaniyah and Irbil. The construction works for this purpose are underway.

- Appointments are being made by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) to take over the administrative authority of the city. This is without any legal basis as the status of Kirkuk has not yet been determined.

- The Kurdish flags were removed from the streets just prior to the visit of the delegation.

- Turkomans and Arabs are prevented from using their lands. Many properties and lands of the non-Kurdish population of the city have been occupied by the armed Kurdish immigrants.

- Turkomans are being forced to sell their properties to the newly arriving Kurds.

- Turkomans in Kirkuk feel that their very existence is under serious threat resulting from the policies and practices mentioned above.

- Turkomans demand that their rights should also be guaranteed. Under the current circumstances, they feel they are left to the mercy of the Kurds.

- Frustration and anger are widely observed among the inhabitants of Kirkuk, and intercommunal violence is not ruled out.

13. (C) Separately, Ankara PUK rep Bahros Galali told PolMilOff July 14 that he had spoken with Tokdemir upon the return of the delegation, and that Tokdemir had been up-beat about what they had seen in Kirkuk. While there was clearly tension, Galali said Tokdemir told him that Turkey was very happy with the reality the team saw in Kirkuk, and that the situation was stable, as Talabani had told the Turks during his recent visit to Ankara. Galali added that he and Talabani expected the Turks to take a hard line in public, and to tell the Turkish press that they had been very tough with the Kurds during their trip. (NOTE: They did, in a July 14 release that warns the IIG that the international community is concerned and that the TAL provisions regarding Kirkuk should be respected.)

14. (C) COMMENT: Even if the points Tokdemir passed us are part of a "hard line" for the public and the diplomatic community, the discrepancy between them and what he allegedly told Galali is striking. When asked about the discrepancy, Tokdemir simply emphasized that all observers his delegation met commented on the ethnic tension in the city.

15. (S) COMMENT (cont.): While we defer to Embassy Baghdad on the ground truth of developments in Kirkuk, we note that the Turkish position on Kirkuk demographics would seem to object to resettling in Kirkuk those Kirkukis who were ethnically cleansed from the area by Saddam. We will be reminding the Turks that we, too, support adherence to the TAL provisions on Kirkuk, but, as the work of the Iraqi Property Claims Commission moves forward, internal migration, including to Kirkuk, will occur. End comment.

16. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.

DEUTSCH